

Q&A: The National Do Not Call Registry

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

Tell Me More About the National Do Not Call Registry.

1. Why would I register my phone number with the National Do Not Call Registry?

The National Do Not Call Registry gives you an opportunity to limit the telemarketing calls you receive. On October 1, 2003, when the National Do Not Call Registry will be enforced, most telemarketers will be required to remove the numbers on the registry from their call lists.

2. Who manages the National Do Not Call Registry?

The National Do Not Call Registry is managed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency. It will be enforced by the FTC and state law enforcement officials.

3. Why was the National Do Not Call Registry created?

The registry was created to offer consumers a choice regarding telemarketing calls. The FTC's decision to create the National Do Not Call Registry was the culmination of a comprehensive, three-year review of the Telemarketing Sales Rule, as well as the Commission's extensive experience enforcing the Rule over seven years. The FTC held numerous workshops, meetings and briefings to solicit feedback from interested parties and considered over 64,000 public comments, most of which favored creating the registry. You can review the entire record of the Rule review at www.ftc.gov/bcp/rulemaking/tsr/tsrrulemaking/index.htm.

How Does Registration Work?

4. How soon after I register will I notice a reduction in calls?

If you register by August 31, 2003, you will start receiving fewer telemarketing calls by October 1, 2003. If you register after September 1, 2003, telemarketers covered by the National Do Not Call Registry will have up to three months from the date you register to stop calling you.

5. I've already registered on my state's do not call list. Do I need to register on the National Do Not Call Registry?

The answer depends on where you live. Most of the 27 states that currently have active do not call lists will transfer numbers from their lists to the National Do Not Call Registry. A few will not. You can find out which states are transferring their do not call lists to the National Do Not Call Registry at www.ftc.gov/donotcall. If you live in a state that is transferring its do not call list to the national registry, you do not need to re-register. On the other hand, if you live in a state that has its own do not call list, but the state is not transferring numbers to the national registry, then you need to register your own number on the national registry. If you are uncertain whether you are on a state do not call list and wish to limit your telemarketing contacts, you can register with the National Do Not Call Registry.

6. When I register my phone number, how long until it shows up on the National Do Not Call Registry?

After you register, your phone number will be available for telemarketers to remove it from their call lists by the next day. Telemarketers will have up to three months to get your phone number and remove it from their call lists.

7. How long does it take after I delete my phone number for it to be deleted from the National Do Not Call Registry?

After you delete your phone number, it will be removed from the National Do Not Call Registry by the next day. But telemarketers have up to three months to access information about your deletion and add your number back to their call lists, if they choose to.

8. If I registered by phone, will I receive a confirmation?

No, but you can verify that your number is on the registry online or by calling the registry's toll-free number.

9. I received a phone call from someone offering to put my name on the National Do Not Call Registry. Should I let them?

No. The FTC will not allow private companies or other such third parties to "pre-register" consumers for the National Do Not Call Registry. Web sites or phone solicitations that claim they can or will register a consumer's name or phone number on a national list — especially those that charge a fee — are a scam. Consumers are able to register directly, or through some state governments, but never through private companies. The National Do Not Call Registry is a free service of the federal government.

What About the Privacy of My Information?

10. If I choose to register my phone number, what personal information will be kept in the national registry, and how will it be used?

The only personal identifying information that will be shared with telemarketers is the phone number you register. Your email address will be stored separately and securely. It will not be accessible by others outside the FTC once we send a reply message to you.

Covered telemarketers are required to download registered phone numbers every three months. Law enforcement officials may access the phone numbers as part of investigations. If your state maintains its own do not call list, it may receive the list of phone numbers in the National Do Not Call Registry to update the state list.

If your phone number is removed from the National Do Not Call Registry, it will be available to the FTC and law enforcement officials for two years from the date of removal. Your phone number may be removed from the registry because it was disconnected, you asked for it to be deleted or your registration expired after five years.

What Phone Numbers Can I Register?

11. Can I register my cell phone number?

Yes.

12. Can I register all my family and friends?

No. You should register only your own telephone numbers.

13. I have more than three personal telephone numbers. How can I register all of those numbers?

You may register up to three telephone numbers at one time on the National Do Not Call Registry Web site. If you have more than three personal telephone numbers, you will have to go through the registration process more than once to register all of your numbers. There is a limit on the number of phone numbers you can register in this manner.

You can only register one phone number each time you call the National Do Not Call Registry. You must call from the phone number you wish to register.

14. What happens if I register more than one number at a time online?

You will get an email for each number you register online. You need to open each email and click on the link in each email within 72 hours to register those numbers.

15. Can I register my business phone number?

The National Do Not Call Registry is only for personal phone numbers. Business to business calls are not covered by the National Do Not Call Registry.

When Does My Registration Expire?

16. How long does my phone number stay registered?

Your phone number will remain on the registry for five years from the date you register (unless you choose to take it off the registry). If you register online, you may want to print the Web page for your records when your registration is accepted.

17. How can I find out when my registration expires?

You can click on the Verify a Registration button any time to check your expiration date. Your registration will expire five years from your registration date. You may want to print the Web page with your registration date for your records.

What If I Move or My Phone Is Disconnected?

18. I moved and got a new phone number. Do I need to register the new number?

Yes, you need to register the new phone number.

19. Do I need to take my old phone number off the list when I get a new number?

No. You can if you would like to, but the system will automatically remove numbers that are disconnected for any reason.

20. What happens if my phone number is disconnected and then reconnected?

If your phone number is disconnected for any reason, and then reconnected, you will need to re-register. Here are some examples:

- If you have a vacation home, and you disconnect the service for the months you are not there, then you need to re-register that phone number when you turn your service on again. Each time you re-register, telemarketers have up to another three months to take your number off their call lists.
- If your phone service was disconnected because of a billing issue, then you need to re-register the phone number when service is re-established. Each time you re-register, telemarketers have up to another three months to take your number off their call lists.

Registration and My Email Address.

21. Why do you need my email address?

When you use the registry's Web site to put a number on the National Do Not Call Registry, we will send you

an email as part of the registration process. You need to click on the link in the email within 72 hours to finalize your registration. We also will email you if you request to verify or delete your registration online. Your email address will not be provided to telemarketers or the public.

22. Can I register online if I do not have an active email address?

No. The online registration process requires an active email address. If you register online, we will send you an email message with a link in it. You need to click on the link in the email within 72 hours to finalize your registration. If you do not have an email address, you can register by phone once phone registration for your state is available.

23. Can I reply to the email I got when I was registering?

No. The email address is a one-way mail service. It cannot accept incoming emails.

24. What if my email address changes after I register? Will I still be able to verify my registration or delete my phone number from the national registry?

Yes, you will be able to use your new email address to verify or delete your phone number online.

I'm Having Problems with Registration.

25. I called to register my phone number, but the message said my phone number could not be verified. Why not?

When you call to register a phone number, you are asked to enter the number you are calling from. The system tries to match the number you enter to "Automatic Number Identification" or ANI, which is like Caller ID for the telephone network. A small percentage of U.S. phones do not have ANI. If your phone doesn't, the system will have trouble locating your phone number. You can register your phone number on the National Do Not Call Registry Web site.

26. I called to register my phone number, but the message said that the phone number I was calling from did not match the phone number I entered. What happened?

To register, you must call from the phone you want to register. For example, you cannot register your home phone number by calling from work.

Also, people in certain communities — such as senior living centers or university residences — have phone numbers that are hidden by a PBX (private branch exchange) telephone system and cannot be matched by the National Do Not Call system. If you live in such a community, you can register your phone number on the registry's Web site using the Register page.

Will All Telemarketing Calls Stop If I Register?

27. If I register my number on the National Do Not Call Registry, will it stop all telemarketing calls?

No. Placing your number on the National Do Not Call Registry will stop most, but not all, telemarketing calls. You may still receive calls from political organizations, charities, telephone surveyors, the business of insurance (to the extent that it is regulated by state law), or companies with which you have an existing business relationship.

28. I get calls soliciting money for political organizations or for charities — will the National Do Not Call Registry stop those calls?

Political solicitations are not covered by the National Do Not Call Registry. Telemarketers calling to solicit charitable contributions are not covered by the registry, but if you make a request to a specific organization that they not call you, they are required to honor your request. If they subsequently call you again, they may be subject to a fine of up to \$11,000.

29. What about telephone surveys?

If the call is really for the sole purpose of conducting a survey, it is not covered. Only telemarketing calls are covered — that is, calls that solicit sales of goods or services. Callers purporting to take a survey, but also offering to sell goods or services, must comply with the National Do Not Call Registry.

30. My number is on the National Do Not Call Registry. After I bought something from a company, a telemarketer representing that organization called me. Is this a violation?

No. Even if you put your number on the National Do Not Call Registry, a company with which you have an established business relationship may call you for up to 18 months after your last purchase or delivery from it, or your last payment to it, unless you ask the company not to call again. (In that case, the company must honor your request not to call. If they subsequently call you again, they may be subject to a fine of up to \$11,000.) Also, if you make an inquiry to a company or submit an application to it, for three months afterwards the company can call you. If you make a specific request to that company not to call you, however, then the company may not call you, even if you have an established business relationship with that company.

If you do not want to put your number on the national registry, you can still prohibit individual telemarketers, one by one, from calling by asking them to put you on their company's do not call list.

31. There appear to be many exemptions to the National Do Not Call Registry. Will the number of telemarketing calls I get really be reduced?

Yes. All professional telemarketing companies must comply with the Telemarketing Sales Rule, even if they are making sales calls on behalf of a company that is not covered. Failing to comply may subject the telemarketing company to a fine of up to \$11,000 for each call that is not in compliance.

32. Are telemarketing calls from overseas covered?

Yes. Any telemarketers calling U.S. consumers are covered, regardless of where they are calling from. If a company within the U.S. solicits sales through an overseas professional telemarketer, that U.S. company is liable for any violations by the telemarketer. The FTC can initiate enforcement actions against such companies.

Other Ways to Limit Telemarketing Calls.

33. I'm happy to have the choice to limit telemarketing contacts, but there are some telemarketing calls I don't mind receiving. Is there a way to allow only certain companies to call?

Yes. If you give a company your written permission to call you, they may do so even if you have placed your number on the National Do Not Call Registry.

34. If I don't want to put my number on the National Do Not Call Registry, can I still stop telemarketers from calling?

Yes. Even if you do not register with the National Do Not Call Registry, you can still prohibit individual telemarketers, one by one, from calling, by asking them to put you on their company's do not call list.

35. What is the relationship between the state do not call lists and the National Do Not Call Registry in terms of coverage?

The National Do Not Call Registry requirements are at least as stringent as most state laws. Because most unwanted telemarketing calls are part of nationwide, interstate selling campaigns, they will be covered by the National Do Not Call Registry. At any rate, the states can continue to enforce their laws, which will not be limited by the National Do Not Call Registry.

Filing a Do Not Call Complaint.

36. Why would I file a do not call complaint?

If your number has been on the National Do Not Call Registry for at least three months and you receive a call from a telemarketer that you believe is covered by the National Do Not Call Registry, you can file a complaint on the registry's Web site. To file a complaint, you must know either the name or telephone number of the company that called you, and the date the company called you.

37. When can I file a do not call complaint?

If you register your phone number between July 1 and August 31, 2003, then you can file a complaint if a telemarketer calls you starting October 1, 2003.

If you register your phone number after August 31, 2003, then you must wait three months before telemarketers must stop calling. After three months, you can file a do not call complaint on the National Do Not Call Registry Web site or by calling the registry's toll-free number.

38. How do I file a do not call complaint? What do I need to file a complaint?

You can file your complaint on the registry's Web site using the File a Complaint page, which will be available starting October 1, 2003. You must know either the name or the phone number of the company that called you. You also must provide the date that the company called you and your registered phone number. You may provide your name and address, but it's not required for you to submit a complaint. You may also call the registry's toll-free number.

39. What happens to my complaint?

Do not call complaints will be entered into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies worldwide. While the FTC does not resolve individual consumer problems, your complaint will help us investigate the company, and could lead to law enforcement action.

40. What if I get a telemarketing call, but can't get the telemarketer's name or phone number?

For law enforcement officials to take action on your complaint, they need either the telemarketer's name or phone number. If you want to report a do not call violation, please get that information.